

FALL 2022
CREATIVE ECOLOGIES:
AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL NARRATIVE, MEDIA AND ART (1980-2020)

PROFESSOR ALLISON CARRUTH

COURSE INFORMATION

Course number: AMS 354 | ART 355 | ENV 373

Meeting time: Tuesdays from 1:30-4:20 pm

Location: Morrison Hall 224

OFFICE HOURS

I vary office hour appointment slots during the semester to ensure there will be times that work for all students. You sign up for an appointment for an individual meeting or on behalf of your group for the collaborative project. Use the link below to schedule an appointment: https://calendly.com/allison_carruth/officehours

Unless otherwise indicated, office hours will be held in Morrison Hall, Room 223.

COURSE SCOPE

With a focus on contemporary American culture, this seminar examines how writers, media makers, and artists address environmental concepts and crises—from biodiversity and extinction to global warming and climate justice. Several organizing questions will guide our work together: How do different creative projects engage with current environmental research and movements, and how do they imagine more livable and just futures? What are the capacities—and the limits—of storytelling, visual art, performance, and other art forms for illuminating environmental problems in and beyond the United States? How do the projects we study respond to the intersecting histories of wilderness, industrialization, and colonialism in the United States? In exploring these questions, we will consider a wide range of primary materials, including graphic narrative, speculative fiction, animation, documentary film, and data visualization.

REQUIRED TEXTS (available at Labyrinth Books)

All other assigned materials will be available on the course Canvas site.

- Lauren Redniss, *Oak Flat: A Fight for Sacred Land in the American West* (2021)
- Patricia Smith, *Blood Dazzler* (2008)
- Jeff VanderMeer, *Borne* (2017)
- Karen Tei Yamashita, *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest* (1990)

We may refine and modify the syllabus and assignments based on your feedback and ideas.

REQUIREMENTS

ASSIGNMENT	% OF GRADE
<p><u>Participation</u> To receive full credit for participation, attend class prepared to discuss the materials, turn off devices other than for notes, tune in to your peers, and contribute ideas and questions as you're inspired. <i>If you cannot attend a seminar due to illness, COVID-19 isolation, or an athletic or other extracurricular event, please email me to discuss how best to catch up on the missed class.</i></p>	10%
<p><u>Individual presentation and short essay</u></p> <p>Presentation: On the week assigned to you, prepare and deliver a presentation that synthesizes your analysis of or response to the week's assigned material. The presentation should help to launch our discussion that day. Format: 5 minutes minimum, 8 minutes max; slides optional.</p> <p>Essay: By the class meeting after your presentation week, write a short reflective essay that expands on or refines the ideas in your presentation. Length: 3-4 pages, double-spaced.</p>	20%
<p><u>Collaborative audio story</u> In small teams as assigned, design, research, and produce an audio story that offers a research-informed and imaginative narrative of either (1) a contemporary artist, writer, filmmaker, artwork, or arts organization focused on environmental problems or (2) a specific site or event through which you tell a creative story about an environmental problem or environmental movement. We will devote time in class to tools and skills needed for this assignment—including interviewing, recording, finding archival sound and/or open access music, storyboarding, and audio editing. Each group will have access to audio recorder kits and to the platform Descript.</p> <p>Format of final story: 10-15 minutes in length, submitted as an mp3 file, with a transcript and credits list. The final story should feature at least two original interviews with written permission to use those interviews for academic work as well as an organizing narrative created by one or more team members' voiceover narration. Interviews may be conducted via Zoom or in person. You may also include other audio material (e.g., field recordings, non-copyright-protected music clips, excerpts from archival news or other archival sound files, etc.). <u>A transcript and a credits list is required to be submitted with your final audio story.</u></p> <p>Interim assignments: (1) A 10-15 minute "pitch" presentation to the class that introduces your topic and project plan; (2) A rough cut of the final story to play in class for feedback.</p> <p>Office hour requirement: Schedule two office hour appointments with Professor Carruth during the semester. Not all team members have to attend these appointments.</p> <p><u>ROADMAP OF DEADLINES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tuesday, November 1 in class: "Pitch" presentation for collaborative project (10-15 minutes) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction of your chosen topic ○ Provisional structure for the audio story ○ Planned interviews and any other audio material to collect / research to conduct ○ Outline of team members' roles and team workflow • Monday, November 14: Rough cut of audio story as an mp3 file, uploaded to Canvas • Friday, December 2: Final audio story as an mp3 file with transcript and credits list, uploaded to Canvas 	40%
<p><u>RESOURCES AND MODELS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Media Lab @ Princeton (led by Professor Carruth) 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • McGraw Digital Learning Lab and recording room https://mcgrawdll.princeton.edu/ • Library Zoom audio recorder equipment for checkout: https://libcal.princeton.edu/equipment/item/121625 . • ODUS Video Production Studio (equipment, training/peer mentorship): https://odus.princeton.edu/odus-programs/video-production-studio • Podcasts for inspiration, from large-audience and professional to DIY and academic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Radio Lab ○ Song Exploder ○ Pop Culture Happy Hour ○ Dear Climate episode of Multispecies Worldbuilding podcast ○ Inherited ○ Floodlines: The story of an unnatural disaster ○ How to Save a Planet (Gimlet) ○ Labyrinth (UCLA/LENS) ○ Drilled (Critical Frequency) ○ The Moth (longstanding narrative podcast—not environmentally-focused per se) ○ Science Vs. (Gimlet) 	
<p><u>Individual essay or creative project due by Dean’s date</u></p> <p>Essay option: Write an analysis of one or more primary materials on our syllabus. The essay should be structured around a thesis that addresses how the selected creative work(s) imagine(s) a concrete environmental concept or crisis and by what specific narrative / aesthetic / artistic methods. While research is optional, you may provide historical, political, or scientific context supported by secondary sources. Length: 8-10 pages, double-spaced.</p> <p>Interim assignment: A partial draft of 4-5 pages max., along with a short description of your plan for expanding and developing the essay.</p> <p>Creative project option: If you would like to develop a creative project in lieu of the final essay, submit a short proposal along with a “proof of concept” on the date that the partial draft is due.</p>	30%

Extension requests for the presentation and reflective essay or the collaborative project must be made at least 48 hours in advance. Extensions for the final assignment due by Dean’s date must be requested in consultation with your residential college dean or director of studies.

SCHEDULE

DATE	ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES AND CREATIVE FORMS	ASSIGNED MATERIALS <i>read/watch/explore in advance of our class meeting each week</i>
T 9.6	course introduction	<p><u>Materials we will examine during class</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Marina Zurkow, "Mesocosm (Wink, TX)" (2012) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Maya Lin's Ghost Forest</i> (2021) <input type="checkbox"/> Maya Lin, "The Princeton Line" (2018)
T 9.13	"varieties of environmentalism," fiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> READ Yamashita, <i>Through the Arc of the Rainforest</i> (1990)
T 9.20	"the trouble with wilderness," nonfiction <i>(team assignments)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> WATCH KCET, <i>Tending the Wild</i>, KCET (2017) <input type="checkbox"/> READ William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" (1995) <input type="checkbox"/> READ Carolyn Finney, "Who Gets Left Out of the 'Great Outdoors' Story" (2021)
T 9.27	extraction, Indigenous sovereignty, graphic narrative, VR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> READ Redniss, <i>Oak Flat</i> (2021) <input type="checkbox"/> READ Kyle Powys Whyte, "Time as Kinship" (2021) <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORE <i>Unceded Territories</i>, co-created by Lawrence Paul Yuxweluptun and Paisley Smith (circa 2019)
T 10.4	audio storytelling workshop #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> LISTEN "Part I: Antediluvian" <i>Floodlines</i> podcast (2020) <input type="checkbox"/> LISTEN "Part II: Come Sunday," <i>Floodlines</i> podcast (2020)
T 10.11	Disaster, environmental racism, testimony, poetry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> READ Smith, <i>Blood Dazzler</i> (2008) <input type="checkbox"/> RE-LISTEN "Part I: Ante-Diluvian" and "Part II: Come Sunday," <i>Floodlines</i> podcast (2020) <input type="checkbox"/> VIEW "Map of Key Locations," Hurricane Katrina, <i>Floodlines</i>
<i>FALL RECESS (10.15-10.23)</i>		
T 10.25	Anthropocene, climate science, modeling, documentary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> WATCH <i>Chasing Ice</i>, dir. Jeff Orlowski (2012) <input type="checkbox"/> WATCH <i>Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change</i>, dir. by Zacharias Kunuk (2010) <input type="checkbox"/> READ P. Crutzen & E. Stoermer, "The Anthropocene" (2000)
T 11.1	DUE IN CLASS "Pitch" presentation for collaborative project (10-15 minutes)	
T 11.1	audio storytelling workshop #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>No new assigned material</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Team pitches presented in class</i>

DATE	ENVIRONMENTAL THEMES AND CREATIVE FORMS	ASSIGNED MATERIALS <i>read/watch/explore in advance of our class meeting each week</i>
T 11.8	eco-apocalypse, multispecies justice, speculative narrative	<input type="checkbox"/> READ VanderMeer, <i>Borne</i> (2017) <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORE <i>What is Missing?</i> , led by Maya Lin (2012-) <input type="checkbox"/> LISTEN "Dear Climate with Una Chaudhuri and Marina Zurkow," Multispecies Worldbuilding Lab (2021)
M 11.14	DUE Rough cut of collaborative project, uploaded to Canvas	
T 11.15	planetary futures sci-fi, animation	<input type="checkbox"/> WATCH <i>WALL-E</i> , released by Pixar (2008) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Team rough cuts played in class for feedback</i>
M 11.21	DUE Partial draft of final essay (4-5 pages) or creative project proposal and proof of concept, uploaded to Canvas	
<i>THANKSGIVING RECESS (11.22-11.27)</i>		
T 11.29	American environmental imagination futures	<input type="checkbox"/> WATCH <i>The Hottest August</i> , dir. by Brett Story <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORE "Visions of the Future," created by JPL/NASA
F 12.2	DUE Final collaborative project (mp3, transcript, and credits list), uploaded to Canvas	
T 12.6	course conclusion	<input type="checkbox"/> IN CLASS <i>Investing in Futures</i> , co-created by Sarah Rothberg and Marina Zurkow
F 12.16	DEAN'S DATE DEADLINE Final essay or creative project, uploaded to Canvas by 5:00 pm	

SEMINAR COMMUNITY

A seminar offers the opportunity for an ongoing conversation and shared inquiry. My hope is that we bring an ethos of community, collaboration, and intellectual generosity to our work. I encourage you to pose ideas or offer constructive criticism at any point toward refining the class. During our weekly meetings, I ask that we tune out distractions and tune into the material, test out ideas with rigor and creativity, and listen to one another. Finally, especially given our theme, take time this semester to be outside, observe the environment, and connect with others.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community, to meaningful discovery and learning, and for the fair evaluation of academic work. All students are expected to abide by the Princeton Honor Code and to complete their collaborative and individual assignments in accordance with University rules and the course guidelines. For details and resources visit the Princeton Honor System website:

<https://ua.princeton.edu/contents/undergraduate-honor-system>.

ACCOMMODATIONS

If you have any approved accommodations, please let me know early in the semester and before relevant deadlines. Princeton students are required to register with the Office of Disability Services (ods@princeton.edu; 258-8840) for disability and academic accommodations.

STUDENT RESOURCES

- Counseling & Psychological Services: <https://uhs.princeton.edu/counseling-psychological-services>
- McGraw Center Digital Learning Lab: <https://mcgraw.princeton.edu/>
- Office of Disability Services: <https://ods.princeton.edu/>
- Office of Undergraduate Research: <http://undergraduateresearch.princeton.edu>
- Reference Librarians: <http://library.princeton.edu/hours/information>
- Writing Center: <http://writing.princeton.edu/center>
- University Health Services and mental health support: <https://uhs.princeton.edu>